

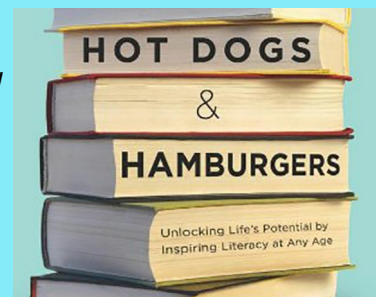
Conference Connection is the monthly eNewsletter of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ. You're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in the work of the Southeast Conference. Don't forget to add clwaldron@secucc.org to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

You may [unsubscribe](#) if you no longer wish to receive our emails.



Literacy is a justice issue! Join with other UCC congregations to participate on project "One Read" on September 8th! This initiative is designed to engage people of faith and provide a common ground surrounding the literacy crisis in the U.S. Our hope is that, through reading and discussion, we will come together, stimulate conversations, and facilitate learning within and beyond our congregations.

It is simple to participate in One Read. Buy and read the book, *Hotdogs and Hamburgers: Unlocking Life's Potential by Inspiring Literacy at Any Age* by Rob Shindler, download the free discussion guide, and encourage your congregation, friends and family to join in. You can get more information about this ongoing justice work of the UCC on the [Reading Changes Lives website by clicking here.](#)



Aging of a Black Boy in America

By Rev. Gwen Thomas
Reprinted from *The Huffington Post*

My grandson just turned six years old. He's smart, funny, loving, affectionate and kind. He's also an African-American male. I remember when his dad, my son, was six. His dad was six and little and cute. I recall his pediatrician in our small Alabama town commenting on how energetic and precocious my son was. That doctor was white and only 15 percent of his patients were black.

Then my son turned nine and his fourth grade teacher in Cobb County Georgia called me and said she was concerned that he was in a gang because he wore a Chicago Bulls athletic outfit too often. He was enamored with Michael Jordan -- just like his white classmate was. That teacher was white. And 10 percent of her students were black. When my son was 13 and buying Valentine's Day candy for the first time for a girl he liked, a policeman followed him around the grocery store until I asked the cop if he had any crime he needed to pursue and assured him my son was spending my hard earned money to buy the three dollar box of chocolates.

As a young adult my son made some unwise (and even dangerous) choices. He was arrested and beaten up by police. Beyond his actual, real mistakes, he has been profiled and harassed for just being. Thank God, he's lived to find his place in the world and redeem himself of his youthful folly. He and my daughter-in-love are doing a great job rearing my grandson, his sister and their baby brother.

But I am afraid now. One day my grandson won't be six and little and cute. In fact, in 12 years, he'll be the age Michael Brown was on the last day of his life. In 11 years, he'll reach Trayvon Martin's last age of maturity.

[Click here to read the rest of the Article at the Huffington Post](#)



Jottings from June

I love this time of year when we begin our program activities after the summer hiatus. Study groups reconvening, Sunday School, Rally Sunday, return of fellowship group meetings. It is a time when we have a sense of renewed purpose and fresh new possibilities in our ministries.

I will be praying for each of you in your various ministries and for the churches in this Conference who live out their purpose daily. You are the salt of the earth and the word of salvation and new life to all who encounter your ministries. You will see that the Conference calendar is full of gatherings and meetings and events. I hope you will be able to participate in some of them. And I trust you will hold all those engaged in those ministries as participants and leaders in your prayers.

I have been busy this summer meeting with Conference leadership, standing committee chairs, and the chairs of the Commission on Ministry committees. We are beginning the process of seeking vision and clarity in our ministries. The Board will meet this month to begin this phase of that work. I have preached at Cookeville, Garden of Grace-Columbia SC, and Trinity Congregational UCC-Athens AL during August. I will be visiting churches in the months to come including Pensacola UCC, Circular-Charleston SC, Phoenix Church-Wildersville TN, United Church Huntsville, First Talladega, Restoration Inclusive Ministries-Atlanta, First Birmingham, and Emmanuel-Greenville SC.

I encourage each of you to share your Good News! with the rest of the Conference as you begin your activities this fall by posting on the SEC Face Book page Southeast Conference United Church of Christ. See you around.

Blessings, June



Fourth Annual Retired Servants Retreat

Retired UCC Clergy, Missionaries, Volunteer Ministry Workers and Spouses of the Southeast and Southern Conferences of the United Church of Christ are invited to a Fourth Annual Retired Servants Retreat at Blowing Rock Conference Center, Blowing Rock, North Carolina October 6-8, 2014 (Monday-Wednesday). Retreat Theme:

Alabama Tennessee Association Annual Meeting

First Congregational UCC- Birmingham Alabama
Friday & Saturday, October 3-4
"Together We Can...Together We Will!"

[Click here for more information on the SECUCC website](#)



African American Women in Ministry Conference at Franklinton Center October 9-11, 2014

With the theme "Embracing God's Call: From Isolation to Celebration" all are invited to join in the African American Women in Ministry Conference at Franklinton Center. This year's conference includes a celebration of 50 years in ministry of Yvonne Delk, the first African American woman ordained in the UCC. Guest speakers include Rev. Dr. Christine Wiley, co-pastor of Covenant Baptist/UCC in Washington, the Rev. Dr. Valerie Bridgeman, founder and Executive Director of WomanPreach and the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Leath, pastor of Campbell AME Church, Media, PA. There will be spirited worship, wisdom circles, panel discussions and a little time for fun and sistership.

[More information and registration materials can be found on the UCC website by clicking here.](#)



March in the Atlanta Pride Parade October 12, 2014

Now in our third year, churches from across the Southeast Conference will join once again to march together in this year's Atlanta Pride parade. Congregations from across the SEC are invited to come to Atlanta and join others in a show of our wide welcome, solidarity, and

Friday evening the keynote speaker will be Rev. J.R. Finney of Covenant Community Church UCC in Center Point, Alabama. Saturday the meeting will discuss and prayerfully vote on the proposal submitted by an appointed Task Force and approved by the Executive Committee of the AL/TN Association. All Association churches are urged to send delegates prepared to vote on this matter.



**Please mark your calendar
with the following events!**

2014

September 8 One Read Day

September 12-13 SEC Board of Directors Retreat

October 3-4 ALATENN Meeting
First Congregational
Birmingham AL

October 6-8 Retired Servants
Retreat, Blowing Rock Assembly
Grounds, Blowing Rock NC

October 9-11 African American
Women in Ministry Conference,
Franklinton Center at Bricks, NC

October 12 Congregations
march in the Atlanta Pride
Parade

October 16 Unveiling of Rush
Memorial Congregational
Church Historic Site Designation

November 1 MID Committee,
Pilgrim Congregational UCC,
Chattanooga, TN

November 4 Retired Clergy
Lunch, Decatur UCC

unity on Sunday, October 12, 2014.

Churches are encouraged to wear UCC or UCC congregation t-shirts and carry signs showing our radical hospitality and inclusion. The past two years have been very successful for our contingent, as we have shouted that "God is Still Speaking." If the growth of our Atlanta congregations is any indication, that message is being heard in the community loud and clear!

The welcome link to participants at Pride is www.ucc.org/atlanta which redirects to www.secucc.org/pride. You can share these links with friends interested in the radical hospitality of the United Church of Christ.

If you are interested in participating in the parade as either a solo participant or as a congregation, please contact Erin Johnson, our volunteer coordinator from Kirkwood UCC. She can be reached at erinrebecca@live.com.



Emergence Retreat - November 7-9, 2014

The Emergence Retreat, created by Peace Congregational UCC, will be held at the beautiful Outdoor Lab in Clemson, South Carolina to bring GLBTQ young adults and their communities of faith together for education, open dialogue, spiritual growth and healing. Registration will open soon.

[Click here for the Emergence website.](#)

[Read the article about Emergence on the SECUCC website by clicking here.](#)

Generosity Corner

Transforming Churches-Transforming Lives CAPITAL CAMPAIGN marches forward....

Because we are now in our 4th year of the Capital Campaign drive, the Conference is now in a position to accept and review church grant applications. Any church or new church start in the Southeast Conference is eligible to apply for grant monies (these are true grants and not loans). The consideration for grant approval is only restricted by the extent the monies will be used to support the 3 initial initiatives of the Campaign:

1. to build Covenant or Connection, or
2. to build Congregations or
3. to build Leaders

What project has your church been wanting to launch but didn't have quite enough funds. This is your opportunity to gather some financial support. The Conference Board of Directors will review project applications for final approval. It is anticipated that Campaign Grants will be in the \$5,000 to \$15,000 range and multiple grants will be issued over the next 4 or 5 years.

**November 7-8 Emergence
Retreat Clemson SC**

**November 15 Commission on
Ministry Meeting, Pilgrim
Congregational UCC,
Chattanooga**

2015

**January 16-19 Winter Youth
Retreat, Blowing Rock
Conference Center, Blowing
Rock, NC**

[For more information download the
flyer here](#)

**February 21 Commission on
Ministry, Pilgrim Congregational
UCC, Chattanooga**

**June 11-13 Pre-event and
Southeast Conference Annual
Meeting, Piedmont College,
Demorest GA**

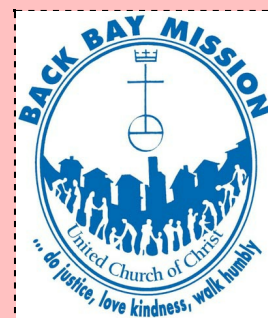
**June 26-30 General Synod in
Cleveland, OH**

**August 8 Commission on
Ministry, Pilgrim Congregational
UCC, Chattanooga**

**October 16-18 Southern
Regional Women's Conference,
Sumatanga Retreat Center,
Gallant AL**

2016

**July 26-29 National Youth Event
Orlando FL**



Back Bay Mission, a community ministry of the United Church of Christ in Biloxi, Mississippi, is seeking an

If you are interested in an application or have questions, please email Debbie Spearman, Generosity Coordinator at dspearman@secucc.org

Debbie Spearman, Generosity Coordinator



"Are you being called to transform the church and the world? Then PATHWAYS may be for you! Become equipped for the journey."

The slogan for the PATHWAYS Theological Education is based on the belief that a personal transformation has the potential to impact the world. When we change, the world that surrounds us also changes. As Marianne Williamson puts it, "the revolution that will save the world is ultimately a personal one." This is the mission of PATHWAYS- to equip learners for work in the church by giving them an opportunity to reinvent themselves through a deep, personal transformation.

A personal transformation that comes with the ability to lead and grow a faith community involves more than acquiring skills and knowledge for ministry. It involves the courage to be, the prudence to act, and the humility to seek, and awareness for things sacred. While participants who are on the PATHWAYS journey have their own stories of personal transformation, a common theme in these stories is a sense of gratitude for the opportunity to explore what God has in store for the church through them as instruments of love, hope, and peace.

Here are some of their testimonies:

Through PATHWAYS I have had questions answered and more questions raised. It has helped me clarify my beliefs and evaluate my own practices and actions. I believe I am living more "awake" than I was in the past. - *Participant from Knoxville, Tennessee*

PATHWAYS is the only program I could find that worked with my family instead of against them. The instructors are amazing! I have also been blessed with ten new wonderful friends! I am so thankful that the United Church of Christ has had the courage to try something new like PATHWAYS. It is an answer to several prayers. - *Participant from Minden, Iowa*

To attend seminary would be amazing, but it is not an option at this point in my life. PATHWAYS is the only viable option for my ministerial education. I am unfathomably grateful for the PATHWAYS program and the chance to fulfill my purpose in ministry and in life. - *Participant from Flowood, Mississippi*

PATHWAYS is inventing a new alternative path for theological education. Online education seems to be a wave of the future and being older, this has been a bit of an adjustment, but is working out well. - *Participant from Nashville, Tennessee*

I don't believe "traditional" seminary is in the cards for me. When I read about the PATHWAYS opportunity, it was a no-brainer for me.

Executive Director. For more than 90 years, the Mission has been a leader in service to the poor and marginalized of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, in social justice education and advocacy in the United Church of Christ, and in volunteer experiences for individuals and congregations. The Executive Director will serve as a highly visible spokesperson for the Mission and oversee the management and financial accountability of the organization and its staff.

Interested candidates should review the complete job description on the Mission's website - thebackbaymission.org - or in the United Church of Christ's Ministry Opportunity listings. All applications are due by September 19, 2014.



CWS Matching Grants for Disaster Relief Kits!

Church World Service is offering matching funds for congregations to create disaster relief kits for their work around the world. There are still many available, and this makes a great activity for volunteers, small groups, and youth groups in your congregation

To read about matching grants for churches click here to go to the CWS website.



Geoffrey Black Plans to Retire in 2015

Citing changes in the national structure of the UCC and the need for fresh leadership as we move into unified governance, General Minister and President Geoffrey Black has announced that he will retire at the end of Synod 2015. This is two years short of his second term. Please join us in thanking Rev. Geoffrey Black for his service and praying for new leadership in the United Church of Christ.

It was the only way I see myself getting to the point of being prepared for the possibility of ordination. This is the perfect PATHWAY for a "non-traditionalist" like me! - *Participant from Davenport, Iowa*

PATHWAYS strives to continue its legacy as the regional theological education program open to serving the wider church in the United Church of Christ. We are now accepting applications for a new Level 1 (foundational level) Cohort for Fall admissions. If you have been feeling the call by God for sometime, we welcome you to give PATHWAYS a try. We will work with you for your new journey.

Visit www.tasc21.net for more information on the PATHWAYS program and to access the online application. Contact admin_pathways@tasc21.net for your inquiries.

Sarah Kim, Dean of PATHWAYS

[You can read the article on UCC.org by clicking here](#)

House of Discovery, an emerging pastoral counseling center and meeting space in Duluth is seeking contributions toward the purchase of chairs for their large meeting space. Please [contact June Boutwell](#) in the Conference office if you would like more information.



[Forward this issue](#)

Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ



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